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SUBJECT: TURKEY: NO AGREEMENT YET ON CSCP MODALITIES

REF: ANKARA 137

Classified By: POL Counselor Daniel O'Grady, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform (CSCP) parties, meeting in Istanbul January 26, did not reach agreement on how the platform will be institutionalized or how it will engage other countries and relate to other regional mechanisms, according to Russian and Georgian Embassy contacts. While Turkey is reportedly eager to reach such agreement and convene a ministerial-level meeting, the other parties preferred to move deliberately, and no ministerial was announced. Rather, the parties expressed their own positions and left it to the Turks to try to find a common denominator on which to base the platform, and agreed to meet again at the Deputy FM-level, though no date was set. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) The five CSCP countries -- Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Russia -- met for the second time at the Deputy FM-level in Istanbul January 26. MFA Deputy U/S Unal Cevikoz led the Turkish side; Azerbaijan was represented by Deputy FM Azimov; Georgia by Deputy FM Bokeria Russia by Deputy FM Titov; and Armenia by MFA Secretary General Avakian, accompanied by International Security Department Head Yedigarian. (NOTE: We reported in ref A that Armenia would be represented by Deputy FM Kocharyan, but this was not the case. END NOTE.)

¶3. (C) According to Russian Embassy PolOff Artur Lyukmanov and Georgian CDA Irakli Koplatadze (PROTECT), the parties reached no specific agreement on the "what and how" of the platform, including how it will engage other countries and international organizations and relate to other regional mechanisms. While Turkey presented a non-paper and was keen to reach such agreement, the other parties felt it was premature. They seemed content at this stage to simply state their countries' views and allow Turkey to undertake the difficult task of trying to develop a framework for the platform, acceptable to all sides. Only then would a Ministerial meeting be possible. The parties agreed to meet again at the Deputy FM-level, though no date was set.

¶4. (C) Koplatadze underscored Georgia's preconditions for the platform: respect for territorial integrity and "supplementarity and complementarity" to UN, OECD and other international and regional mechanisms. Non-participation by Abkhaz and South Ossetian separatist government representatives is fundamental. Russia has agreed to the five state principle for the CSCP, but spoke of "new realities" that it thought needed to be recognized. Otherwise, Russia was in listening mode. Koplatadze described Armenia as "neutral," suggesting that Yerevan could

be the party most inclined to press ahead with the CSCP's institutionalization, even as it remained close to Russia in its remarks. Koplatadze and Lyukmanov characterized Azerbaijan as wary, perhaps more so than Georgia. Lyukmanov surmised that, while Azerbaijan prefers that Turkey and Armenia talk to each other in its presence, the Turkey-Armenia rapprochement that the CSCP has contributed to can not be entirely comfortable for Baku. Speaking separately with CONGEN Istanbul poloff, Armenian BSEC PermRep Mirzoyan (PROTECT), who also attended the meeting, said Azerbaijan was "completely obstructionist," "objecting to everything." Lyukmanov noted that Russia was pleased that both the Azerbaijani and Armenian representatives referenced the Moscow Declaration as a basis for dialogue in their remarks.

COMMENT

15. (C) Noting the acute level of dysfunction that exists among the five parties (no one country has diplomatic relations with all the others), Lyukmanov admired Turkey's skillful coordination and appreciated the workload it has assumed (at a time when the MFA South Caucasus directorate is severely short-staffed). He likened it to the tenacity of a parent that desperately wants its child to grow up. While the circumstances surrounding the CSCP's birth were difficult, the Turks seem to be surprising their neighbors by managing to keep this concept afloat. One benefit is that, having invested considerable time and energy in the CSCP, the Turks may be doubly motivated to follow through on the process of normalizing relations with Armenia; doing so could

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catalyze the regional stability Turkey aims to promote through the platform. However, the mediator role for Turkey, as we have seen in the Middle East, forces Ankara to try to position itself equidistant from the other parties -- not always where we expect a NATO ally to be.

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Jeffrey